

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA) celebrated the 45th anniversary of the implementation of Medicare – the largest source of healthcare coverage in the nation. On July 30, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed Medicare into law. However, it wasn't until July 1, 1966 that enrollees were first entered into the program. Since that time, Medicare has provided an important safety net to America's seniors and people with disabilities.

"The median income for seniors is just over \$19,000 a year, which is barely enough to make ends meet," said Rep. Scott. "Medicare provides seniors with healthcare coverage they would not otherwise be able to afford. In fact, before Medicare, one-half of America's seniors were uninsured. Thankfully, the Medicare program has allowed these seniors to get the coverage they deserve, for 45 years and counting."

The Affordable Care Act, passed last year, made many important improvements to the Medicare program by taking steps to close the donut hole and providing for free preventive care. The law also extended the solvency of Medicare, which would have gone broke by 2016 without reform. Recently, the Republican-controlled House passed a budget proposal that would dismantle Medicare and replace it with a voucher system that would only cover a fraction of the actual cost of care. The proposal would shift costs to seniors, people with disabilities, and their families, more than doubling beneficiary costs by 2022.

"We can't afford to go backwards," said Rep. Scott. "Healthcare reform made great strides in improving the Medicare program, and we must continue to go forward to ensure that our children and grandchildren have access to this successful program."

Rep. Scott added, "We all know that the U.S. is facing difficult economic times and as a country we have tough decisions to make. The deficit must be addressed. However, it should be done in a way that protects the health and vitality of our citizens. We should not balance the budget on the backs of our nation's seniors and most vulnerable."

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